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FEBRUARY

VOL.
33

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All the Year Round

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Weekly Journal

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CHARLES DICKENS

PART 183.

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1884.

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CONTENTS OF PART 183.

No. 792.	PAGE
A Drawn Game. Chapter XVII. Benedick and Beatrice	241
Chronicles of English Counties—Staffordshire. Part I.	245
"Chinese Gordon." In Two Parts. Part I.	250
Recreations of Men of Letters	255
Reclaimed by Right. A Story in Four Chapters.	259
Chapters III., IV.	259

No. 793.	PAGE
A Drawn Game. Chapter XVIII. Dick has greatness thrust upon him	265
Reminiscences of Jamaica. In Three Parts. Part I.	270
A Secret. A Poem	275
"Chinese Gordon." In Two Parts. Part II.	281
Compulsory Thrift	281
Between Two Stools. A Story	283

No. 794.	PAGE
A Drawn Game. Chapter XIX. "B. Tuck Fecit"...	289
Reminiscences of Jamaica. In Three Parts. Part II.	294
One Dinner a Week.	299
Chronicles of English Counties—Staffordshire. Part II.	303
An Unfinished Task. A Story in Four Chapters.	309
Chapters I., II.	309

No. 795.	PAGE
A Drawn Game. Chapter XX. Duns	313
Reminiscences of Jamaica. In Three Parts. Part III.	316
The Fisheries Exhibition	320
Yearning. A Poem	325
Robin y Ree. A Poem	325
An Unfinished Task. A Story in Four Chapters.	332
Chapters III., IV.	332

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PAGE

289
294
299
303

309

313

316

320

325

325

332

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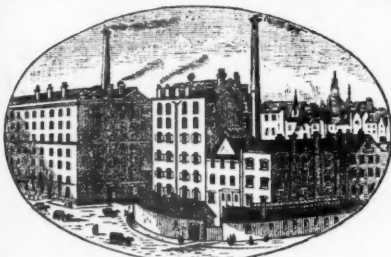
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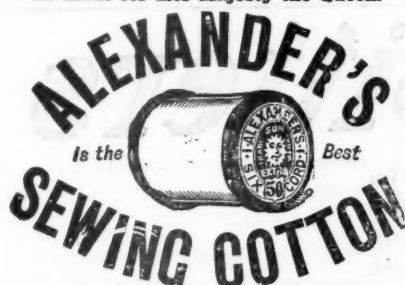
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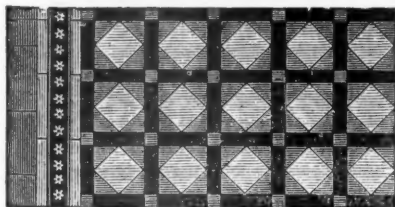
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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A DRAWN GAME.

BY BASIL.

AUTHOR OF "LOVE THE DEBT," ETC.

CHAPTER XVII. BENEDICK AND BEATRICE.

"DICK"—Mrs. Tuck called her admirable nephew "Dick," when they were by themselves, but "Richard" in the hearing of the stately Ida—"Dick, I wish you'd be more serious in your attentions to her."

"I don't know what you call serious," replied Dick in an aggrieved voice, "this is my first to-day," looking at his half-smoked cigar remorsefully, as though it was that which really had reason to complain of his inattention.

His aunt had objected to his saturating himself with tobacco, as making against his chances with La Superba.

"It's a great sacrifice," rejoined his aunt, laughing, "and you've only to throw in your affections with it to turn the scale."

"They're not worth much, I dare say, aunt; but they're worth more than she can give in exchange for them. She's freezing."

"She wouldn't freeze you if you weren't yourself at freezing-point. You can't freeze warm water, Dick. Besides, it's all her manner. I used to think her freezing myself till I was ill, and that brought out all her affection."

"It's no use thinking of that till the hunting is over," said Dick, as if his aunt had proposed his falling ill there and then. "I might come a cropper at the end of the season, and put my shoulder out, if you think it would fetch her. I can't do more than a shoulder," as though specifying the uttermost farthing he could go to in a bargain.

"And a cold shoulder, too. Well, Dick, if you think you've only to yawn for the belle and heiress of the county to drop

into your mouth, I've nothing more to say."

"My dear aunt, there's just one person who knows the value of her beauty and fortune better than either you or I, and that's the belle and heiress herself. She's as proud as Lucifer."

"Pooh! You men are so full of yourselves, that you've no eyes for us. She has the lowest opinion of herself of any girl I know. Even when she had the whole county at her feet, I couldn't get her to think anything of herself, I couldn't indeed. But now they're held off by the report that my poor dear husband means to leave his fortune away from her, she doesn't think herself pretty even. She's so sore and hurt about it that she'd be grateful for your attentions. And I can tell you, Dick, that gratitude goes deeper with her than love with most girls, and would soon slip into love besides."

Dick sat silent, watching lazily the curling clouds of smoke as they soared to the ceiling. He was ideally handsome, and a man of fiery energy and iron endurance in the business of pleasure—hunting, shooting, etc.—but five minutes of real business was insupportable and exhausting to him. Indeed, the only business his most flattering friends thought him fit for was matrimony. He was brought up to it, as a girl is, as the only prospect and profession worth taking into account in his case. Some heiress was to invest in his face, figure, and fascinating manners, and he was to be worn by her thenceforth as a jewel of gold. And if, as his aunt put it, he had but to yawn for some such heiress to drop into his mouth, he would have been married before this; but something more was necessary to secure a purchaser even for his attractions, and this something Dick was too easy-going to

supply. He was as little given as a Yankee shopman to press his wares on a probable purchaser. She might take them or leave them as she liked; it was more her lookout than his. In fact, Dick, though needy and reckless, was nevertheless no true fortune-hunter, for the simple reason that he never looked beyond the passing moment. He cheerfully discounted to-morrow, and would sacrifice years of future luxury to an hour of present ease.

Therefore he felt this business of the pursuit of Ida a bore. She was the most unapproachable and impregnable of all the maidens of his acquaintance. So far from the gates of the city being thrown open at his approach, he would have to sit down before it for a siege of many weary, dreary months. Now, as he could not urge this plea of boredom for raising the siege to his aunt at the risk of her anger, and at the cost of comfortable quarters, he had to cast about for some creditable excuses for his backwardness in the business.

It was this which made him plead Ida's pride in apology for the languor of his suit, and now, having been beaten back upon that point, he was in search of another, as he watched the smoke-wreaths melt to thin air above his head.

"They say Seville-Sutton first cannoned Ellerdale off the course, and then threw her over himself."

"They say!" exclaimed his aunt, too enraged to be reticent; "I say she refused Mr. Seville-Sutton and Lord Ellerdale within five minutes of each other. It was the night of our ball, and she told me all about it when we were by ourselves. Nothing I could say would move her to change her mind and accept either of them; and I can tell you, Dick, I said all I could, for I didn't know then that you had any thought of her—not that I know it now, either—but you led me to think so in your letter, and therefore, when the Don came the next morning to renew his proposal, I told him what my poor dear husband said about leaving his money to charities. I knew it was as good as putting it in the papers, and that it would keep the field clear of rivals for you."

"Faith, aunt, you've so well preserved the covers, that the game is tame. There's no fun in knocking a bird over that's beaten up to the muzzle of your gun. Let the poor thing have a chance."

"Poor thing, she's no chance against you!" nettled by a flippancy which

sounded profane when applied to her stately protégée.

"No choice, anyhow, or only Hobson's choice," replied the placid Dick, not nettled in the least.

"Well, Dick, it's easy to throw open the preserve, as you call it."

"It would be a bad business for me, aunt, I know, but only fair to the girl. It was of her I was thinking," with splendid mendacity.

His aunt took it for magnanimity in her adored nephew, though in anyone else she would have known it for mendacity.

Dick's indifference to a fortune of three thousand pounds a year and a girl whom he himself had christened—not in the least ironically—"La Superba," will appear incredible if we forget that his taste in beauty was neither exalted nor refined. If Ida had been pretty, forward, and a flirt, Dick would have met her half-way; but nothing was more antipathetic to him than this queenly, reserved, and superb beauty, whose glance, like Ithuriel's spear, seemed to pierce him through and through, and unmask his falsehood. It was not so at all. Ida was as unsuspecting as a child, and "thought no ill where no ill seemed." "By the pattern of her own thoughts she cut out the purity of those of others," yet somehow both Dick and his aunt were often made uncomfortable by her frank gaze, in which, as in a clear fountain, they saw not heaven reflected, but the dark shadows of themselves.

Therefore, Dick, to whom present ease of mind and body was everything, shrank from this discomfiting courtship. He felt as though he would have, metaphorically speaking, to walk on tip-toe, now and henceforth, in order to keep up to Ida's standard, and the mere thought of this was intolerable to a man of his easy-going disposition and principle.

Why on earth didn't his aunt get old Tuck to adopt him, Dick, a most eligible orphan, and then he might have had "the estate without the live-stock on it," as Sir Anthony Absolute sensibly put it? Dick felt rather aggrieved than grateful to his aunt, though he had the sense to conceal his disgust. She pretended to be so fond of him too, and she was fond of him; and if she had not been the deuce and all of a matchmaker, it's ten to one but she would at least have shared the three thousand pounds a year between them. The thing might be managed yet if he proposed for the girl and was refused. He would have a

kind of breach of promise claim for wounded feelings, blighted hopes, broken health, and ruined prospects.

As this brilliant idea of Dick's involved provision for the future at the cost of the keenest present discomfort, we need hardly say that it vanished with his cigar into smoke. But the base of this idea, the sense that he, Dick, was a cruelly ill-used person, remained. Indeed, Dick always had a heavy account against the world in general. Having done it the honour to adorn it, like the lily of the field, he ought at least to have been allowed the lily's immunity from toiling and spinning. Whence then these bills, and duns, and matchmakers? They meant, if they meant anything, that Dick should do something for himself, which was absurd. Now this idea of his—that all his creditors were deep in his debt—made Dick the most successful of "Coshers." Your beggar on horseback is your successful beggar. To those who want nothing we grudge nothing, but from him who wants everything we turn indignant away. Now Dick's light-hearted carelessness about the morrow, and his easy way of accepting a favour as if he were conferring it, gave his great friends the impression that he was independent of their hospitality, therefore they pressed it upon him with importunate generosity.

To his credit be it spoken he bore the persecution of his creditors with Christian fortitude, and forgave, and even forgot, his persecutors the moment their letters were burnt, or their backs turned.

On the present occasion, for instance, Mrs. Tuck had no sooner left the room—having been called off to look after her poor dear husband—than Dick proceeded to knock about the billiard-balls in happy forgetfulness of her scheme.

Mrs. Tuck's poor dear husband had taken to reading a grisly medical work which had upon him the mimetic effect a pantomime has on a child. He personated the most monstrous cases presented to him in that chamber of horrors, and then sent in a panic for Mrs. Tuck to rouse him from the nightmare.

Thus Mrs. Tuck was interrupted in this interesting conversation with her nephew by a summons from Mr. Tuck, who had just discovered in himself certain symptoms of a disease so new that it had only recently been invented by the most fashionable of the London physicians.

It took her some time to reassure him, so that on her return to the billiard-room she

found that Dick had gone for a gallop. Thereupon, being still in a matchmaking mood, she sought Ida.

Ida was in the small drawing-room, unusually idle, making a book the excuse of some bitter meditations.

Mrs. Tuck stood over the girl with her hand on her shoulder, and began the attack by a flank movement after her fashion. A sinuous approach to her subject had become an instinct with her—a survival from old days of difficulty and defencelessness. "A dog, whose great-grandfather was a wolf," says Darwin, "showed a trace of its wild parentage only in one way, by never going in a straight line to its object." Mrs. Tuck's sinuous mode of making for her object was an instinct with a similar origin, dating back from days when she had been harassed into habits of caution.

"Have you got through all your house-keeping, dear?"

"Why, it's nearly one o'clock, Mrs. Tuck! I got through it two hours ago."

"I don't know how it is, Ida, but you do a day's work in an hour, and glide through it as if you were going through the Lancers."

"I went to school to it, Mrs. Tuck, and it would have been my calling but for you," with one of her bright looks of gratitude.

"We're quits there, my dear. You've been a daughter to me, Ida, and more than most daughters are to their mothers," stroking the girl's hair affectionately. "But it's not the work you do so much as the way you do it which surprises me. If you had to sweep a room you'd do it like a duchess. Richard says he's always inclined to call you 'Your Grace.'"

"Captain Brabazon has a nickname for everyone, and I couldn't hope to escape."

"No, nor you haven't, dear, though it isn't 'Her Grace.' He always calls you 'La Superba' to me."

"The name for Genoa, isn't it, Mrs. Tuck? I remember your saying what a pretentious sham you found it when you got to know it."

"Well, he hasn't found you out yet, my dear, for his fear is that he'll never get to know you. You freeze him, he says."

"I can't imagine then what he's like when he thaws. He makes himself always so pleasant."

"My dear Ida, you must let me tell him you said so."

"Don't you think he knows it himself, Mrs. Tuck?" archly.

"Indeed, dear, I do not. I don't think him conceited at all—not at all; and you wouldn't think so either, Ida, if you heard the way he spoke to me this morning of you and of himself."

Here Mrs. Tuck paused for Ida's curiosity to hint its longing for the substance of this interesting conversation.

But Ida's curiosity was not so excited as to linger about the subject at all.

"I didn't mean to call him conceited exactly, Mrs. Tuck."

"My dear, I know what you mean quite well. You mean that everyone is well pleased with him, but that no one is so well pleased with him as he is with himself. But if you knew all that I know—the beauties, the heiresses who have flung themselves at his head——"

Here Mrs. Tuck tried to express by flinging up her hands an amazement at her nephew's moderation as great as that of Clive at his own in keeping his hands off the sumless treasuries of India. She hoped to stir in Ida Millamant's ambition:

But 'tis the glory to have pierced the swain,
For whom inferior beauties sigh in vain.
If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
That heart, which others bleed for, bleed for me.

But Ida, having a better opinion of her own sex than Mrs. Tuck had, was merely confirmed in her impression of the captain's coxcombry.

"But Richard has absurd ideas about fortune-hunting," Mrs. Tuck went on. "He thinks it degrading to a poor man to marry a girl with a fortune, no matter what he may give in exchange. He used to provoke me by always talking in this way the last time he was here"—very significant stress on "last," to suggest to Ida the inference that the disinterested Dick on his first visit was withheld from a proposal by the consideration of Ida's fortune—a consideration now out of the way.

But Dick, during that former visit, had been so successful in smothering the least symptom of his devouring passion, that Ida construed this significant hint to mean that Mrs. Tuck had then been match-making as usual, pressing Ida herself upon her reluctant nephew.

This happy thought held her silent, a silence which Mrs. Tuck of course misinterpreted into a meditation upon her nephew's magnanimity.

"It's your rich men," she resumed,

trying to clinch a nail she thought she had driven in, "it's your rich men, like the Don, who think so much of riches. They can be mean without the reproach of meanness; and they are," with sudden emphasis, inspired by a thought of another than the Don, her poor dear husband, to wit. "A poor man cannot afford to be mean, even if he were inclined to be. As for Richard, he runs into the other extreme to absurdity. Why should he try to stifle his love for a girl because she happens to be an heiress?"

Ida felt compelled to answer a question put to her so pointedly.

"But isn't that also to think too much of riches, Mrs. Tuck? To think nothing can counterbalance them?"

"To be sure it is, my dear," most heartily, happy in the thought that she was making immense way. "And that's just what I said to Richard when he was last here. 'It's you,' I said, 'who make too much of riches when you speak as if they were more than all you can give in exchange for them.' But he insisted that no one, not even you—not even the girl herself," hastily correcting herself, "would think his love disinterested if there were three thousand pounds a year in the scale."

It was hardly possible for Ida even to affect not to see through this frank disguise. Yet the perplexed lover who made the plaintive appeal:

Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
But—why did you kick me downstairs?

had less reason to doubt a well-dissembled passion than Ida. For Dick had not "protested too much" by coldness, moroseness, or the shunning of her society, but had been polite, pleasant, ceremoniously attentive, and fatally indifferent. Therefore, Ida, though not doubting in the least that Mrs. Tuck had some such conversation with her nephew, had not the least doubt either that her nephew had been gracefully excusing himself from the distasteful match this inveterate matchmaker had proposed to him. It was very humiliating, mortifying—more mortifying to Ida than to most girls—and she could not help feeling slightly irritated with Mrs. Tuck, and more repelled than ever from the lady-killing captain. She took her usual refuge in silence, on which Mrs. Tuck put the most favourable construction.

Great, therefore, was her disgust to find that the nett result of her morning's match-

making was the wider estrangement of Dick and Ida. Dick treated her

With courtesy and with respect enough ;
But not with such familiar instances,
Nor with such free and friendly conference,
As he had used of old.

And Mrs. Tuck rightly put Brutus's interpretation upon this punctilious politeness.

Ever note, Lucilius,
When love begins to sicken and decay,
It useth an enforced ceremony.

Ida, on the other hand, was more freezing than ever.

This check put Mrs. Tuck on her mettle as a matchmaker. Indeed, it was now doubly a point of honour with her to bring this thing about; not only because she had taken it in hand, but also because she had told Ida, almost in so many words, that Dick was deeply in love with her. She felt it to be unfortunate that she had so committed herself, but there was no help for it; or, at least, no other help than to bring Dick to Ida's feet. With this view she congratulated him, when next they were by themselves, on the progress he had made in Ida's good graces.

"Progress!" exclaimed Dick; "she's gone down ten degrees below zero since this morning."

"My dear Dick, I should have thought you knew something of girls by this. When a girl first becomes conscious of a kindly feeling towards a man, she's so afraid of his seeing it that she doubles the distance between them. I thought her manner towards you to-night most encouraging."

"What! Well, aunt, you ought to know. A little more such encouragement and she will cut me dead, and then I may venture to propose."

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

STAFFORDSHIRE. PART I.

ALL the world associates Staffordshire with the Potteries; it is Potland or Crock country in everybody's imagination, and although it may be possible to show that the county has other claims on attention, yet certainly the industry by which its fame is spread all over the world demands a leading position in its chronicles. The Potteries, as the district is called in proud pre-eminence, as though any other potteries in other parts were not worth consideration, although not an inviting region to visit, yet does not give the

idea of having been in any way spoilt by its pot-works, grotesque and ugly as many of them are. A wild barren tract of country has been reclaimed from its waste and desolation, and made the site of busy towns and thriving settlements, while in modern times we have seen a most fruitful and successful revival of what might have been deemed an almost lost industrial art.

The beginnings of the potter's art in Staffordshire are hard to trace. We may suppose that the excellent clay which abounds in the neighbourhood was turned to account by the Celtic tribes who pastured their cattle in the valleys, but in truth the remains of pottery in the tumuli and burial mounds of the district are not very numerous or important. And while in various parts of the kingdom evidences of extensive Roman potteries have been discovered, no direct proof, so far as we know, has been had of the existence of Roman kilns in Staffordshire. Probably the growth of religious houses in England gave the first impulse to the industry, for the Potteries seem to have been for centuries actually Tileries, where the inlaid tiles used for the pavement of churches and monasteries were made in considerable quantities. Still, the potters of Staffordshire turned out meritorious work in the early Norman days, and examples are extant of fine jugs marked with the horse-shoe, the badge of the Ferrers family, who may have been originally the barons Ferriers who presided over the ironworks of Normandy, and who had ceased to exist as a ruling family before the advent of the thirteenth century. But it may be guessed that the skill of our workers in iron and pewter, and of those who carved bowls and platters from the beech and ash, interfered very much with the potter's art. The Anglo-Saxon mind is impatient of vessels that easily break, and a slow and patient cookery in earthenware excites a feeling of contempt. "Why, these people cook their meat in basins!" was the exclamation of a worthy old English servant on coming into possession of a French kitchen, where the batterie de cuisine was chiefly of earthenware. And centuries back even people of distinction quaffed their drink from the black leathern jack or the pewter tankard.

And thus in the seventeenth century, while abroad the ceramic art had reached its apogee, in Staffordshire it was still in a rude and primitive stage, rather of decline than advance. Rude butter-pots of cylindrical

shape, which held twelve or fourteen pounds of butter at least, were the staple of manufacture, with homely mugs such as the people of Lancashire and Cheshire use to this day for their ale. These wares poor crate-men carried on their backs all over the country—over the northern part of the country, that is. But everything in the way of pottery, artistic, or elegant, or fine in texture, came from the Continent, the solitary exception being, perhaps, in that brown Toby Toss-pot ware, often quaint and original in design, but of no high artistic merit. Other articles which collectors may meet with of Staffordshire make are the Bellarmine or long beards, those rotund jars with narrow necks and narrow bases, a form of vessel which sometimes may still be seen in use by workmen for their noon-tide refreshment.

Now if the Reformation had injured the potters by stopping the demand for tiles and plaques, the secret of making which was soon lost, the reign of Elizabeth brought a little compensation in the introduction of tobacco, and the consequent demand for pipes. There is something marvellous in the speedy conquest of the old world by the new habit. That people in England took to it freely from the first may be judged from the number of broken pipes that are found. These in the beginning are strangely small in the bowl, affording only a few whiffs of smoke for each charge of tobacco, and from their smallness they have got the name of fairy pipes, and some have even attributed them to the Romans; but they are good Staffordshire clay nearly all, and not earlier than Elizabeth's time. In the reign of James, notwithstanding the royal counterblast, the bowls of tobacco-pipes began to increase in size. The weed was no longer so highly priced, and people could afford more prolonged enjoyment. The more ornate and elaborate pipes came no doubt from Holland, but the ordinary pipe was from Staffordshire. The early pipe has a flat heel, so that the smoker may rest the bowl on the table, and on this heel the maker sometimes stamps his mark. "C.R." for Charles Riggs, a maker of Newcastle-under-Lyne, is one of the most noticeable. But as time went on the heel became a projecting spur, and the pipe assumed its modern form of a yard of clay, while our Dutch king and his followers are responsible for the still more capacious bowls and more prolonged whiffings.

The Dutch king brought other changes for the potters of Staffordshire. In his

train came two brother of the name of Elers, from Holland, who, prospecting among the Potteries, discovered beds of fine compact red clay at Bradwell and Dimsdale, where they erected kilns, and began to make fine red ware, in imitation of that of Japan. "Afterwards," writes Miss Edgeworth, "they made a sort of brown glazed stoneware, coarse and heavy; yet the glazing of these, such as it was, could not be performed without great inconvenience. They used salt, which they threw into the oven at a certain time of the baking of the vessels. The fumes from this were so odious, that the neighbourhood were alarmed, and forced the strangers to abandon their potteries and quit the country." Now Miss Edgeworth ought to have known something about these first introducers of new methods, as she was a direct descendant, on the mother's side, from one of the brothers Elers. But it seems hardly to have been the case that they were driven away by their neighbours, who were pretty well inured to smoke and smother, and stench of various kinds. The salt glaze which the Elers brothers introduced was welcomed rather than otherwise by the potters, who soon saw its advantages over the lead glaze then in use. But the brothers kept that process, as well as all the rest, a secret, till one of the native potters of Burslem, by name Astbury, devoted himself to the task of finding out their mystery. To effect this he assumed the garb and manners of an idiot, a notion utilised in these later days by the Silver King. The man hung about the works, doing odd jobs and making himself as useful as a "softie" could be, till the wily Dutchmen came to have confidence in him, and thinking a pair of hands without a head just the thing for their secret processes, took him into regular employ. The pretended idiot served his masters faithfully for two years or more. At the end of that time the workman retired, and set up as a master-potter, to the anger and indignation of his old employers. Perhaps it was the shame of having been "bubbled," or "bit," as the phraseology of that day would express it, that drove them away from their works, or, more likely, they found that at such a distance from their market the manufacture could not be successfully carried on. Anyhow, they removed about 1710 to Lambeth, where they associated themselves with a company of glass manufacturers, established in 1676 by Venetians under

the patronage of the Duke of Buckingham. In the course of a century, curiously enough, the descendants of Elers and Astbury came together, connected by marriage or ties of friendship with the Wedgwood family.

Soon after Astbury's adventure as an assumed idiot, he becomes the hero of another story, in which the discovery of the use of powdered flint in the manufacture of earthenware is accounted for. Again Miss Edgeworth shall tell the story, for, as a descendant of the Elers family, and an intimate friend of the Wedgwoods, she has a right to be heard. "There was a Staffordshire potter, whose name I forget. He stopped, on a journey to London, at Dunstable, in Bedfordshire, where the soil is flinty and chalky. He consulted the hostler of the inn about some disorder in his horse's eye. The hostler advised that powdered flint should be put into the eye, and for this purpose he threw a flint into the fire to calcine, that it might be more easily pulverised. The potter, who was standing by, observed the great whiteness of the calcined flint, and being an ingenious as well as an observing man, immediately thought of applying this circumstance to the improvement of his pottery. He first tried the experiment of mixing finely powdered flints with tobacco-pipe clay. He succeeded to his hopes, and made white stoneware, which put all the brown and coloured stoneware out of fashion."

We are now coming to Wedgwood's time, the Wedgwood family having been potters from the seventeenth century and perhaps earlier—master-potters that is, people of some means, and not without cultivation, in the homely and simple fashion of the times, so that Josiah Wedgwood began his work with all the advantages of early training and family connection. Once out of his apprenticeship, Wedgwood soon began his course of experimental manufacture, first bringing out his green glazed earthenware for dessert-services with forms of vine-leaves and fruit. At first Wedgwood was in partnership with one Wieldon, but soon set up for himself, first at the Old Churchyard, and then, to quote from a record in the potter's dialect, "an' arter that he flitted to th' Bell Workhus, wheer he put up th' bellconey for t' ring th' men to ther work, i'sted o' blowin' 'em together wi' a hurn." To explain this it may be necessary to say that up to Wedgwood's time it was the custom to summon

the potters together by blowing a horn, and that he was the first to make use of a bell for the purpose.

At the "Bell Workhus," otherwise known as Ivy House Pottery, Wedgwood made his first great success with his cream-coloured ware, which became known as Queen's ware, when good Queen Charlotte, with the full approbation of Farmer George, had graciously accepted a caudle and breakfast service at the hands of the courtly and far-sighted potter. The cream-ware became the fashion, and the pottery had more work than it could manage, so that presently Wedgwood removed to more roomy premises, known as the Black Works at Ridge House, afterwards famous under the name of Etruria. Here Wedgwood brought out one after another various important bodies—the black basalt, the jasper, the white stone, the cane-coloured ware, and many others. These ornamental substances were Wedgwood's great hobby, and he devoted great pains and expense to the reproduction in these favourite bodies of many of the masterpieces of classic ceramic art. The story of the Barberini, or Portland Vase, will be remembered. On the death of the Duchess of Portland, who had bought this vase from Sir William Hamilton, it was offered for sale; and Wedgwood, who had made up his mind to purchase it and reproduce it, bid against the reigning Duke of Portland up to a thousand pounds. At last the duke, seeing that the potter was fully determined not to be outbid, crossed over to him, and having bluntly asked what Wedgwood wanted with the vase, offered to leave it in his hands for as long as he wanted it, if he—Wedgwood—would cease to bid for it. What the auctioneer was about to let such a compact be carried out under his very nose, and under the suspended hammer, history does not tell us. Wedgwood produced fifty of his reproductions of the Barberini Vase, which came to the British Museum, it will be remembered, and was smashed by a lunatic many years ago, but was well repaired and is still to be seen there. These copies were in the favourite black basalt; but many other copies have since been made from the original moulds.

To carry out all this ornamental work, standing apart from the regular and more profitable business of making pottery, Wedgwood took a partner, one Bentley, a Derbyshire man in origin, who had settled in Liverpool as a Manchester warehouse-

man. Thus many of the Wedgwood reproductions of classic vases are marked "Wedgwood and Bentley." The firm established works at Chelsea, where many of the fine vases were painted by men who had learnt their art in the old Chelsea china works. At this period the firm had a commission from the Empress Catherine of Russia for a magnificent service, painted with English landscapes, with the condition that in each a green frog or toad should appear. Wedgwood objected to the condition, but was overruled, for it seemed that the service was wanted for the czarina's Grenouiller Palace, where everything bore the same device.

Since Wedgwood's days—he died in 1795—the history of the Potteries has been one of continued progress and advance. In the heart of the railway communications of the country, and with easy access to Liverpool and its shipping, Staffordshire now supplies half the world as well as the home-market with good and useful crockery. And Burslem, known as the mother of the Potteries, has taken the lead of many towns of greater importance in establishing a museum and library treating of its own ceramic art, where the history and progress of the Potteries may be studied on the spot.

The Potteries in the north, and the iron districts in the south of Staffordshire are separated by a tract of fertile and pleasant country, a land of manor - houses, and mansions, and secluded villages, and sleepy country towns, where ancient Watling Street traverses quiet scenes, and where nothing seems to have been disturbed since the days of the Romans, except that the ploughman, year after year turning his continual furrow, has buried deeper and deeper all the surface relics of the past. Passing over this quiet and fruitful district for the present, we will continue the industrial records of the country in its southern extremity, where Birmingham, locally in Warwickshire, forms the centre of a district which, if we were to recast our territorial divisions, would form the compact and homogeneous department of Hardweshire. Of these Staffordshire iron towns, the chief is Wolverhampton—a town which seems to have outgrown its local history. Its name, and that alone, has preserved the memory of a Saxon lady of high degree, the widow of Aldhelm, Earl of Northampton—the Lady Wulfruna, who founded here a college of secular canons, and whose name,

as a prefix to the original Saxon Hamtun, has been softened to Wolverhampton. The town was noted for ages for the skill of its workers in metals, and Dr. Plot, whose Natural History of Staffordshire is dedicated to the high and mighty Prince James, the second of his name, describes in glowing terms the skill of the locksmiths of Wolverhampton, and the perfection to which they had brought their art.

Then just on the border of the county by Birmingham lies Handsworth, with Soho, associated with the memory of the great inventor of the modern steam-engine. Then there is Great Barr on the slope of the lofty Barrbeacon, perhaps the central hub of England, where of old, it is said, the British Druids performed their mystic rites, and where in later days the beacon-fires of the Saxons gave warning of war or invasion to the very limits of the Mercian land. Here now stands the ancient mansion of the Scots, where once the gentle Shenstone wooed the muse; and Walsall's fine church is here in full view, and more to the left, among the smoke of furnaces, lies Wednesbury—the sacred berg of Woden, the grim Saxon Mars. All about, indeed, in the names of places may be traced relics of the ancient Teutonic worship, of which this district with the fiery beacon-mount in the centre was probably the chief seat. For the fierce Mercians clung to their ancient heathen worship long after the other Saxon kingdoms had been Christianised. Wednesfield, not far from Wolverhampton, where later on a great battle was fought between Saxon and Dane, seems to preserve the memory of some earlier field of slaughter dedicated to the god who delighted in the incense of human blood. But, in local parlance, Wednesbury is softened into Wedgebury, and it seems probable that Wedgewood was also once Wodenswood, and that there is thus a link, in the name of the peaceful father of the Potteries, with the memory of the flame-breathing god of the Mercian land. Some such war-god seems appropriate enough for the fiery district below, and for the men of Bilston, the brawny forgermen; while Tipton, noted in the prize-ring for its Slasher, may be said to have carried the traditions of Woden into the brutal contests of modern days. Tettenhall, again, recalls the memory of ancient slaughter, where a great battle was fought against the Danes, and probably the swords and spearheads that flashed on that fatal field,

and whose rusted relics are found in the barrows that crown the neighbouring heights, were forged not far from where now the smoke and flames of a thousand furnaces cover the country with a pall of smoke by day, and a glaring crimson fire-canopy by night. For this Wodensland is now known as the Black Country, and well deserves its name.

Northwards of this district lies Cannock Chase, once the favourite hunting-ground of fierce Penda and the heathen Mercian kings. The wide forest is now reduced to a few scattered heaths of no great extent, but with some fine commanding brows from which the spires of Lichfield are seen rising from a fertile nook of wood and meadow.

One would like to know something about the famed St. Chad of Lichfield, who brought with him from Lindisfarne some faint savour of the early Celtic church, of Iona washed by the wild Atlantic waves, and of those Nature-loving recluses whose wanderings over hill and dale attract our sympathies perhaps more than the more dignified ways of their successors. St. Chad must have been a famous wanderer for his time, if he visited all the wells and springs that bear his name in various parts of the kingdom. But it is pleasant to find a real St. Chad's Well, and a homely but ancient little church close by, which is said to occupy the very site of his lonely cell, where at sunset reach the shadows of the tall cathedral spires. On the way, a pleasant lakelet reflects the fairy-like spires of the great temple on the hill above, and the white plumage of the swans that float on its surface. And here once a year come the children with garlands to dress the well of good St. Chad.

The sight of the cathedral on its mound, with the close encircling it, like donjon and outer wall, brings to mind the great event in Lichfield history, its famous siege. Lichfield was never a walled town, but the strong position of the cathedral—close suggested it as a place of arms for the king's forces at the outbreak of the civil war. And thus in 1643 the place was attacked by the Parliamentary Army under Lord Broek and Sir John Gell, while the close was defended vigorously by the Royalists under the command of Sir Richard Dyott. This Dyott, by the way, was of a well-known Staffordshire family, one of whose earliest members has the almost unique distinction of having been

mentioned by name by Shakespeare, Second Part of King Henry the Fourth, Act Third, Scene Third: "There was little John Doit, of Staffordshire, and black George Bare, etc." And it was one of these Dyotts who fired the most successful shot during the siege. For, as Lord Brook was reconnoitring the place, standing in the doorway of one of the houses of the town—a spot still pointed out—this Dyott, who, tradition has it, was deaf and dumb, fired a shot at him from an arquebus, so well-aimed that it pierced his brain and brought him dead to the ground. A great subject of gratulation was this to the garrison, and of especially good omen, as it happened, curiously enough, on St. Chad's Day. But the progress of the siege was not much hindered by Lord Brook's death, and eventually the close capitulated to Sir John Gell. After a while, however, the place was recaptured by Prince Rupert, and held out for the king till the battle of Naseby virtually put an end to the war.

A quaint little story of the times may here be interpolated, apropos to nothing, perhaps, but still giving a better notion of the actual spirit of the times than more dignified records:

"Captain Hunt, Governor of Astley Castle, and brother of the Governor of Tamworth, in February, 1645, sent a trumpeter to Lichfield for exchange of some prisoners, taken by Colonel Bagot.

"The colonel asked the trumpeter, 'What their officers would do if it pleased God to send peace upon this treaty at Uxbridge.'

"'Nay,' said the trumpeter, 'what will your officers do? for you are many of you younger brothers and will want employment; but our officers—let peace come when it will—have good trades to return to.'"

There is something pathetic in the result of the unswerving loyalty of the Lichfield folk, even as read in the usually prosaic churchwardens' accounts.

For instance, "A.D. 1643, paid for ringing when Prince Rupert went to Newark and at his return, one shilling and eightpence." "A.D. 1644, paid for ringing when the first news came from York, three shillings." That is, for the first news from Marston Moor, when the day seemed fairly won for the Royalists. And again the sad laconic entry: "A.D. 1650, paid for washing out the king's arms, five shillings." Again there is a world of eloquence in the sudden parsimony of the authorities: "A.D. 1658, to the ringing

September 6th, when they did ring for the Lord Protector, sixpence." The bells rang out merrily enough for the Restoration, and the ringers were well paid again with two shillings and four shillings. And then the whole story of the downfall of the Stuarts is told in this entry: "1689, for ringing on the day the bishops were acquitted, three shillings." The sad finale to all this loyalty appears in the last noteworthy entry: "1716, paid for ringing when the rebels ran from Perth."

And yet, even when the dynasty was changed, and the whole order of things was reversed, the authorities of Lichfield were staunch to their ancient intolerance, as appears from a curious presentment, dated March 8, 1743, made to the court at Whitehall, when dangers were apprehended from Popish plots on behalf of the Pretender. "The bailiffs and justices say that they have made diligent search throughout the city, and certify that all was peaceable and quiet; that there was no Papist, save only two or three women, or non-juror, in the city; neither have we amongst us any Quaker, or above two Dissenters from the Established Church of England, under any denomination whatsoever, and that the whole city was zealously attached to his majesty's person and government."

A stroll into the market-place of the town, where a feeble kind of market is going on—old women are sitting at little stalls under their umbrellas, and a few ducks quacking dolefully from out of a basket—discovers a statue of a seated figure in a ponderous chair, with its back turned to the old women, so that at the first glance nothing strikes the eye but this square chair-back, and the round shoulders of the figure that occupies it. But, on a more complete view, you recognise the features of the "great lexicographer," and are reminded that here is his birthplace. Samuel Johnson was the son of a bookseller here, and was educated at the free-school of Lichfield, but seems to have cast no very favourable eye upon the place. After Johnson left Oxford, it will be remembered, he settled for a while at Birmingham, where he married a widow with a good fortune for those days—some eight hundred pounds—and with this capital he returned to his native place, and set up a school at Edial Hall, about two miles distant. But he never seems to have had more than three scholars, one of whom was David Garrick, and with David he

presently set forth to seek his fortunes in London. There are sundry memorials of Johnson in the little museum at Lichfield—his teacup, that was so often replenished, and a saucer that, it seems, was so much of a fetish for him that he could not take his meals in comfort unless it were by his side.

The one great blot in the chronicles of Lichfield is that the city was the scene of one of the last, if not the very last, religious martyrdoms in England, for, in 1611, one Edward Wightman, of Burton-upon-Trent, was tried in the Consistory Court of Lichfield upon sixteen charges of heresy, and condemned. The king's writ to the Sheriff of Lichfield for his execution was dated March 9th, 1611, at Westminster, directing that he should be burnt in some public place within the city of Lichfield, and the barbarous sentence was soon afterwards executed; all which seems incredible, looking to the date—the days of Shakespeare and of Raleigh, the palmy days of literature and imagination. But the poor man was probably either an Arian or an Anabaptist—forms of heresy that the leaders of all the chief religious parties were equally ready to punish; and thus no voice, it seems, was raised against an atrocity which the spirit of the age would certainly have condemned.

"CHINESE GORDON."*

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THE author of this book—one of the most moving and heroic romances of real life ever given to the world—is specially qualified for his undertaking in that he is a kinsman of Gordon; and has, therefore, been able to command information not easily accessible to a writer less favourably placed. To a personal knowledge of Gordon's character and life, he has been able to add a close acquaintance with his private and official correspondence, and the disposal of a mass of documents of the highest significance. These are great advantages, and Mr. Hake has turned them to excellent account. But if in these respects his kinship was a benefit, in others it has been a drawback. For one thing it was a considerable curb to that freedom which as a man and a writer he must have felt to be appropriate to his great subject; with the result that many

* "The Story of Chinese Gordon," by A. Egmont Hake, author of "Paris Originals," "Flattering Tales," etc. With two portraits and two maps. London: Remington and Co., 1884.

episodes in the drama of Gordon's career are treated with a reticence which we must both admire and regret. Further than this, he has been checked to some extent by respect for one of the strongest points in Gordon's character—his almost morbid modesty. Publicity he loathes; and Mr. Hake in his preface apologises to him for giving his life to the world, not merely without his consent, but without his knowledge. To have asked his permission to publish, or to have let him suspect that a volume was being written of which he was the subject, would have been to court a passionate veto which could not be gained; consequently the world must have remained in that state of mingled curiosity and misapprehension, which existed prior to the appearance of this book. The author's courage in this matter indeed claims our gratitude; and it is impossible not to feel that in thus risking Gordon's displeasure, both he and those other members of the family who share, in one way or another, the responsibility of the work, have done a wise and useful thing.

Two books, previously published, have partially acquainted a certain number of people with the greatness of Gordon's character, and with some of the astonishing events of his career—to wit, *The Ever-Victorious Army*, by the late Andrew Wilson; and *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa*, by Dr. Birkbeck Hill. It was inevitable that the facts therein treated should be included in Mr. Hake's study; but in his hands they take clearer shape, fuller significance, and their proper places in the story of Gordon's life.

Much of Mr. Hake's material is new, and most of it bears very valuably on three of the most urgent matters now troubling the world. These are the war between France and China, the wild chaos in the Soudan, and the complicated dangers in South Africa. In this connection the book is full of teaching, and explains many things that, without it, were understood but dimly, if at all. And besides this it is particularly interesting because it contains a large number of Gordon's familiar letters. In the first half of the book, indeed, these and other documents are quoted at such length and so often, that in some degree they disturb the current of the narrative; and, from the literary point of view, this portion contrasts a little unfavourably with the rest. The second part, dealing chiefly with Gordon's work in Africa, is an excellent piece of writing, full of graphic vigour, and touched

with something of the wonderful romance of Gordon's life. Criticism aside, however, the book is, for the vast majority, one of absorbing interest. Whilst those who already know something of Gordon and his career will read it for the further light it gives them, and whilst many will read it for its teaching on current affairs, the mass of people will read it for its affecting and astonishing story, and for the sake of its hero, who, so simple, true, and strong, and so sincerely Christian, is one of the greatest men of any time.

Gordon's family has made a respectable figure in history. Ancestors of his fought on either side at Preston-Pans, and the son of one of them served in the Fortieth, Seventy-second, and Eleventh Regiments; fighting valiantly at Minorca and Louisburgh, and with Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham. This gentleman had three sons, who all entered the army. Two died in the service; the third, William Henry Gordon, who was born in 1786, entered the Royal Artillery, became a Lieutenant-General, and, by his marriage with a daughter of the late Samuel Enderby, of Blackheath, was the father of Chinese Gordon. Gordon's grandfather, on the mother's side, was a merchant and ship-owner of ability and enterprise. His ships took to Boston that unhappy tea, which, so to speak, fired the mine of the War of Independence. His boldness and tenacity largely aided the exploration and colonisation of the Southern Hemisphere. He ballasted his whalers with convicts for Botany Bay, and carried the earliest settlers to Australia and New Zealand. His ships were the first to round Cape Horn and trade in the archipelagos of the Pacific; and they were his whalers who first fished in Japanese waters, and did their best to build a commerce with the Middle Kingdom. Not every firm can show a record like to this.

Gordon's father was a man of memorable qualities. A good and cultivated soldier, he was firm and humorous, generous and robust. In his presence none could be dull, neither could the careless or neglectful escape his severity. His figure was striking; his individuality was strong; the twinkle of his clear blue eye was not to be forgotten. And Gordon's mother was no less remarkable in character and spirit. Cheerful under difficulties, which she conquered with no show of effort, she possessed a perfect temper, and a genius for making the best of everything.

Charles Gordon was educated at Taunton and at Woolwich. His early life presents little of note. Of no great physical strength, he appears to have done little either at school or at the Royal Military Academy. Still, we are told that in the record of these early years there was "always humour," and an occasional burst of fire and resolution. One incident only is given by Mr. Hake. Once during his cadetship he was told "he would never make an officer." He tore the epaulets from his shoulders and flung them at his superior's feet.

In 1854 he was gazetted an officer of Engineers; and, after a narrow escape from duty elsewhere, was ordered to the Crimea. Forced inaction at Balaklava gave place to arduous and dangerous work in the trenches at Sebastopol. Of this period we shall only say that it is figurative of his later career; that he was slightly wounded, and more than once all but killed; that he showed himself a fatalist; and that his intelligence and zeal won the admiration of his superiors. Colonel Chesney, indeed, affirms that his personal knowledge of the enemy's movements was such as no other officer attained. He had already made his mark.

The Taiping rebellion was a climax of discontent and religious fanaticism. The province of Kwang-tung had become a Tom Tiddler's Ground for every sort of blackguard and pirate; it was rotten with secret societies; its suffering and rebellious people had learned the use of arms; the result was the worst of anarchy. Hereupon there came from enlightened Europe an individual who, possibly at risk of his head, preached the Gospel of Christ. He met an obscure schoolmaster, one Hung-tsu-Schuen, to whom he presented a choice collection of tracts, telling him, at the same time, that he, the obscure schoolmaster, would attain to the highest rank in the Celestial Empire. Schoolmasters, we know, occasionally cherish ambitions, and they are often very shrewd fellows indeed. But in these matters never did schoolmaster in any land equal Hung of China. He conceived a great scheme; he trusted to his ability to carry it out; time and people were ripe. Straightway he went forth, proclaiming that he had seen the Lord God Almighty, who had, he said, appealed to him as the Second Celestial Brother. The schoolmaster became the prophet—a prophet of freedom and vengeance, an agent of Divine wrath. Wise in his generation he stood forth in

a land of poor and oppressed, as the champion of the oppressed and the poor. Superior persons—who, it seems, exist in the Flowery Land as elsewhere—said in their mild way that he was mad. His madness centred in a determination to usurp the Dragon Throne, to exterminate the hated Manchus, and to restore to power and glory the degraded Mings, and he very nearly succeeded. The people, filled with hope and fire by his propaganda, flocked to his standard, and in a little while he and twenty thousand followers were stalking through the land, breaking idols in the temples, and effacing Confucian texts from the schools. Open war with the authorities duly followed, and Hung, full of ability and resource, had pretty much his own way; defeat swelled his ranks and his influence equally with victory. At last he formally declared himself the Heavenly King, The Emperor of the Great Peace, and at the head of hundreds of thousands of barbaric desperadoes—women and men together—pirates from the coast, bandits from the mountains, with a vast horde of scum of the earth, armed with knife and cutlass, decked in tawdry dress, and maddened on by flutter of gaudy flags and banners, he passed from province to province, robbery and murder before him, and fire and famine in his train. After a march of seven hundred miles he captured the city of Nanking, and there, under the shadow of the Porcelain Tower, set up a monstrous worship and tyrannic state, and made his kinsmen kings.

A conflict, desultory in its conduct, but unspeakably savage in its incidents, was waged between the Taipings and the Chinese authorities. The Pekin Government was powerful but supine, and hampered by interior politics and unfriendly relations with France and England. Its policy had been to drive the rebels towards the sea. The policy was bad, for the rebels had everything to gain from the cities of the coast—wealth, and munition, and arms. The Government discovered its folly, and with truly Celestial cunning, persevered in it. It saw that the foreign communities would defend themselves and their possessions, and thus the rebels would be caught between two fires. Shanghai, for long an asylum for the destitute and distracted fugitives from the stricken inlands, was soon attacked by the Faithful One himself; but he got a bad beating from the allied French and English troops. That was in 1860, in which year

Gordon, after doing valuable service on the frontier commission in Bessarabia and Armenia, left home for China. He was present at the sack and burning of the Summer Palace at Peking, and there or thereabouts he remained as Commanding Engineer till the spring of 1862, and gained great knowledge of the country and the people. When the Taipings grew troublesome at Shanghai, Gordon was appointed to the district command. He drove them from the neighbourhood; and then—quiet for a few months—employed his time in surveying a thirty mile radius round the port. Every town and village in that radius, and we dare say every creek and path in that flat network of paths and creeks, became known to him, and the knowledge was presently of the utmost value.

The Shanghai traders had commissioned two American adventurers, Ward and Burgevine, to raise a foreign force for defence against the rebels. Ward was killed, and Burgevine being cashiered for corrupt practices, the British Governor was asked to provide a captain. The choice fell on Gordon. He did not rush upon his task, however, but asked that he might first finish his thirty mile survey, as it would be of the utmost service in the campaign. This granted, the temporary command was given to Captain Holland, of the Marines. This officer was overconfident and ill-informed; he was severely defeated in an attack on the rebel city of Taitsan. The Taipings triumphed over the "foreign devils," and Mr. Hake gives a curious account of the battle, written by one of the principal wangs or warrior-chiefs. The result was that Gordon left his survey unfinished, and hastened to the head of the Ever Victorious Army.

He determined to strike at the heart of the rebellion, and decided instantly upon a complete change of tactics. Petty operations, confined to a thirty mile radius, gave place to a large strategic plan, which involved the capture of a great number of rebel posts, ending with the great city of Soochow, the fall of which would crush the Taipings, and ensure the ultimate surrender of Nanking. In a few days he moved (by two steamers) about one thousand men to Fushan, on the southern bank of the Yangtze estuary. He landed under cover of an imperial force entrenched near by, and, watched by a large body of Taipings, reached Fushan on April 3rd, 1863, and attacked forthwith. A smart action ended in evacuation by the

rebels; thus Fushan was gained, and Chanzu, a loyal city hard pressed, ten miles inland, was relieved. The mandarins at the latter city received Gordon and his officers in state. Leaving three hundred men in the stockade, the young commander returned to headquarters at Sung Kiang. Here he set to work to discipline his army, which was terribly disorganised and demoralised. Under Burgevine and Ward it was customary to bargain for the performance of special service, reward being full licence to loot a fallen city. Gordon established regular pay on a liberal scale, and broke the habit of plunder. His force, three or four thousand strong, consisted of infantry and artillery: the infantry being armed with smooth-bore muskets, save a chosen few who were entrusted with Enfield rifles. The rank and file were Chinese; the officers all foreign, and mostly adventurers—brave, reckless, quarrelsome. The artillery—siege and field alike—was good; the equipment of it, and transport, and general provision for rapid movement, were complete; wherein we see the brain of the true commander. His army organised, his steamers and gunboats ready, Gordon was prepared to take the field.

A line drawn on the map from Taitsan to Soochow will pass through Quinsan. These, the three leading strongholds of the rebels, were connected by a road. Before the end of April, Gordon started with his little force to Quinsan, the centre of the three centres, and, therefore, the strategic key of the situation. On his way, however, he heard that the rebel commander at Taitsan had played a terrible trick on the Imperial forces. This treacherous rebel-chief made proposals of surrender to Governor Li Hung Chang, the Bismarck of China, as he has been called, and accordingly a native force was sent to take over the place. That force was treacherously imprisoned, and two hundred men were beheaded. On hearing this, Gordon instantly changed his plan, and marched rapidly on Taitsan. The rebel force numbered ten thousand, of whom a fifth were picked warriors, with several English, French, and American renegades working the guns. Gordon's army numbered three thousand of all arms. He laid siege to the place at once. The outlying stockades fell immediately; he then seized the bridges of the main canal; and, working round out of gunshot, captured the forts protecting the Quinsan road, and so isolated the town. He opened fire at six

hundred yards; in two hours the walls were breached; the moat was then bridged with gunboats, and the stormers under Captain Bannen crossed to the attack. A tremendous conflict ensued; fire-balls pelted the bridge, bullets the column, which, however, held its way into the breach, where it was met and repulsed. Then Gordon bombarded the breach for twenty minutes; once more the stormers charged, the breach was crowned, the city won; and in their hurry to escape the enemy trampled each other to death.

Gordon's troops had broken rule, and plundered. He punished them by marching straight to the siege of Quinsan before they could sell their loot. At Quinsan Gordon ordered the mandarins to front the walls with strong stockades, and man them with their own troops, whilst he marched his own men back to headquarters to reorganise. There he complained, in a general order, of laxity amongst the officers; and to improve the force, filled vacancies with certain officers of the Ninety-ninth Regiment, who had been allowed to volunteer. But when starting again for Quinsan, his majors struck for increased pay. Gordon refused point-blank. They resigned, with a request that they should be allowed to serve on the pending expedition. Their resignations were accepted, their services declined. The majors, finding there was "only one commander in that army," submitted.

The story of the capture of Quinsan is a sort of wonder. The place, as we have said, was the key to the military situation; it was captured in the most brilliant and original manner—particulars of which, however, must be sought in Mr. Hake's pages. It became the headquarters of the Ever Victorious Army, a change which caused a mutiny; for at Quinsan the men could not do as they did at Sung Kiang—sell their loot. The artillery refused to fall in, and threatened to blow all the officers to pieces, of which Gordon was informed by written proclamation. The non-commissioned officers were the instigators; he called them up, and asked who wrote the proclamation. They professed entire ignorance. Gordon replied that one in every five would be shot. They groaned, and Gordon noticing a corporal who groaned louder and longer than the rest, with his own hand dragged him from the ranks, and ordered two soldiers standing by to shoot him on the spot. It was done. Gordon confined the rest for one hour, telling them that within that time

if the men had not paraded, and if the writer's name were not given up, every fifth man among them would be shot. The men "fell in"; the writer of the proclamation was disclosed; he was the executed corporal.

Quinsan captured, it remained to invest Soochow, which means that a number of minor places clustering round it had first to be carried. But Gordon was hampered and disheartened—even to the point of throwing up his command—by the bad faith of the Chinese authorities, who broke their promise to pay his troops regularly, and even fired on them occasionally by way of proving their sense of humour. But Gordon had barely reached Shanghai, full of his determination to resign, than he heard that Burgevine, whose intrigue and bluster never ceased, had collected a well-armed band of foreign rowdies, declared for the Taipings, and seized a Chinese war-steamer, in which he and his desperadoes made their way into Soochow. In this Gordon recognised the birth of another and more desperate phase of the campaign. To resign was to abandon a suffering people not merely to the Taipings, whose dominion was one of blight and murder, but to a most unscrupulous and violent filibuster. Moreover, Burgevine had commanded Gordon's own troops, had plundered treasuries and temples with them; and they, with present pay in arrear, and future prospect of unlimited loot, were ready to desert to the enemy. Under these conditions, Gordon was hard pressed by the rebels at Quinsan and Kahpoo. "I am," he writes, "in a very isolated position, and have to do most of the work myself." He was, in fact, in the hands of traitors, and could trust no one. Desperate fighting continued, and some neat negotiations with Burgevine's "scum of Shanghai," which ended in their defection from the rebel cause; and in the latter, Gordon's great character shines in a curious way. The chiefs in Soochow suspected Burgevine, and imprisoned him; whereupon Gordon wrote begging them to spare his life. Yet all this while Burgevine was planning to cut up Gordon, and would have succeeded but for a companion, not less desperate, but infinitely more honest. In the multitudinous engagements, too, Gordon had always to be in the front, and often to lead in person. He would take one or other of his officers by the arm, and lead him into the thickest of the fire. He was never armed, and carried only a little cane,

which the natives called "Gordon's magic wand of victory."

Two heroic attacks and some curious negotiation ended in the capitulation of Soochow, whereupon occurred one of the most tremendous events in Gordon's career. The capture of Soochow, as we have explained, was the vital blow to the rebellion. The fighting which made it possible had all been planned by Gordon, and executed by Gordon's three or four thousand troops; yet no sooner was the end achieved than the Chinese authorities betrayed him. They refused to pay his troops; the rebel wangs, or warrior-kings, for whose lives he had pleaded, were treacherously murdered, and the fallen city was given over to be looted by the Imperial troops of Governor Li Hung Chang.

The murder of the five kings, with its accompaniments of treachery and cold-blooded horror, made a great impression in this country at the time. The faddists charged Gordon with the deed; but the faddists were confuted by the facts elicited in an official enquiry. Gordon, as we have said, pleaded for the lives of those men, and he was promised they should be honourably dealt with. We see him enter the fallen city of Soochow, alone, and innocent of what was being done; the gates are shut upon him by the Taipings; he is a prisoner for twenty-four hours among the thousands of men he had conquered. He escapes—to find the city sacked, and to weep over the mangled bodies of the kings for whose safety he had pledged himself. For the first time during the war he armed—armed and went forth to seek Li, the traitor. There is not the least doubt that if he had met his enemy he would have shot him on the spot. But Li had been informed of Gordon's terrible anger, and hid. For many days Gordon was "hot and instant in his trace"; but in vain. Back he came to Quinsan with his troops, whom he had ordered to assist in the pursuit, and there with deep emotion read to them an account of what had happened.

The massacre placed him in unparalleled difficulty. On the one hand the clamour of Europe to desist, on the other the call of his conscience and the mute appeal of the people to finish the work he had begun and so brilliantly carried on. "To waver was to fail." He ignored the world's opinion, and resumed command. Some "final victories" crushed the rebellion for ever; the provinces were

restored to peace and prosperity; the empire was rescued from an age of civil war. The destiny of China had depended on him, and he saved it.

Even to this day China, the treacherous, the matter-of-fact, the mercenary, is grateful, as well she may be. The campaign against the Taipings is one of the great chapters in military history; the part that Gordon played in it is altogether singular and heroic.

RECREATIONS OF MEN OF LETTERS.

LITERARY men, as a rule, do not devote enough time to outdoor recreation. They are eloquent advocates of it in others. They lay down rules for the guidance of the public, but do not practise what they preach. Indeed, the question of recreation is very much like the question of stimulants. It is impossible to lay down rules for brain-workers, because it is impossible to know the temperament and circumstances of each individual case; but the conditions under which most literary men work prevent them from taking even a little recreation. Their toil is pretty equal to that of the galley-slave, as Mr. Clark Russell says, in these days of severe competition, and some of them, in consequence, break down before their time. But many cases might be cited showing that excessive mental work is not hostile to health. The most striking is that of the octogenarian scientist, the Abbé Moigno, who seems to have chained himself to his desk. "I have published," he says, "already a hundred and fifty volumes, small and large. I scarcely ever leave my work-table, and never take walking exercise, yet I have not experienced any trace of headache or brain-weariness, or constipation, or any other trouble." This case is no doubt exceptional, though the famous lexicographer, Littré, could put in a strong claim for the non-necessity of rest. For at least thirteen years, whilst he was engaged upon his dictionary, he never allowed himself more than five hours' rest out of the twenty-four, and he worked Sunday and week-day alike all the year round. Even whilst order was being restored in his bedroom, which also served as his workshop, he took some work downstairs. In the intervals thus employed he composed the preface to his dictionary. The great age which he attained—he was eighty when he died—is a striking proof of the enormous

amount of brain-work it takes to break down a good constitution, but the value of the testimony is lessened by the fact that on the completion of his dictionary he was left in a very feeble state of health.

It may be taken for granted that the men who can work uninterruptedly for years are few in number, and that those who neglect recreation pay the penalty either in sleeplessness, in a long illness, or in an early death. It was want of recreation which killed Bayard Taylor. His ancestors were long-lived, and nature had given him a stalwart frame; but the possession of extraordinary strength led him to neglect the precautions adopted by his less-favoured brethren. He did, it is said, the work of two able-bodied men every day. In consequence, his health gave way, and he was cut off at the comparatively early age of fifty-three. Hugh Miller's death was brought about by a self-inflicted blow, when reason reeled under the exertion of an overworked brain. Rosetti, after his wife's death, shut himself up alone amid mediæval relics in a large gloomy house. Instead of taking daily exercise or travelling, he sought relief from grief and sleeplessness in chloral, which became his familiar friend. Such cases might be multiplied indefinitely, and furnish a strong plea for the necessity of bodily exercise.

Anthony Trollope's recreation took a form not very common among men of letters. For many years of his life he gave a large part of his time to the recreations of a country gentleman. He loved to gallop across country, and to follow the hounds. Hunting, he said, was one of the great joys of his life, but he followed the pursuit under very great disadvantages. "I am too blind to see the hounds turning," he confessed, "and cannot therefore tell whether the fox has gone this way or that. Indeed, all the notice I take of hounds is not to run over them. My eyes are so constituted that I cannot see the nature of a fence. I either follow someone or ride at it with the full conviction that I may be going into a horse-pond or a gravel-pit. I have jumped into both one and the other." He regarded it as a duty to ride to hounds, and for thirty years he performed this duty. Mr. Trollope's sporting proclivities, as a matter of course, displeased Mr. E. A. Freeman, the enemy of field-sports in general. "Was it possible," asked Mr. Freeman, quoting from Cicero, "that any educated man should find delight

in so coarse a pursuit?" Alas! many educated men have found amusement in sports neither elevating nor gentle. Was not cock-fighting the favourite diversion of Roger Ascham? It is true the practice was condemned by some of his admirers, not because it was cruel, but because it was unscholarly. "Few, if any, in the sixteenth century," wrote Hartley Coleridge, "condemned any sport because it involved the pain or destruction of animals, and none would call the pastime of monarchs low. At a more advanced age, Izaak Walton, when in describing the best method of stitching a frog's thigh to a pike-hook, cautions you 'to use him as if you loved him,' never suspected that the time would come when his instruction would expose him to a charge of cruelty, of which there was not a particle in his whole composition, or in Roger Ascham's either. Angling is doubtless much fitter recreation for a 'contemplative man,' besides being much cheaper for a poor man than cock-fighting; but it is equally opposite to the poet's rule, which bids us:

"Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

Hartley Coleridge did not deny that Ascham showed a strange taste, but said that it was a taste he had himself known to exist in men of the kindest hearts and most powerful minds. No doubt he had in his thoughts Christopher North, who was, unquestionably, fond of cock-fighting as well as of wrestling.

Mr. Trollope's methods of work and recreation closely resembled those of Sir Walter Scott, who, like Trollope, began the day's work at five o'clock. When the weather was bad, Lockhart tells us, it was the practice of Scott to labour all the morning; but the general rule was to be out and on horseback by one o'clock at the latest; while, if a more distant excursion had been proposed overnight, he was ready to start on it by ten; his occasional rainy days of unintermitted study forming a fund in his favour out of which he drew whenever the sun shone with special brightness. At that time the chief sport was coursing, of which Scott seems to have been very fond. Sometimes he exchanged coursing for fishing. Later in life his recreation took a form more in harmony with Mr. Freeman's tastes. "Planting and pruning trees," Sir Walter said, "I could work at from morning till night. There is a sort

of self-congratulation, a little tickling self-flattery, in the idea that while you are pleasing and amusing yourself, you are seriously contributing to the future welfare of the country." The American historian, George Bancroft, finds equal pleasure and relief in gardening. His garden at Newport is said to contain every variety of rose worth raising, and although he keeps a gardener, he understands all about their care himself, and engages in the work whenever he feels inclined. But his chief form of recreation is horseback riding. He is still engaged in revising the great work of his life, his history of the United States, and still begins his work at five o'clock. After a light breakfast he resumes his work, which he continues until one or two o'clock. At four he is mounted on his horse, and usually spends three hours in the saddle. Although in his eighty-fourth year, he declares that he has vigour enough to ride all day, and he attributes it entirely to the way in which he regulates his work and his recreation.

Unfortunately, every author cannot afford to keep a horse, but those who cannot, may find consolation in the medical declaration that walking is the best form of exercise. As a matter of fact, most of our best-known authors have been satisfied with this form of recreation, which is not without its advantages. It is safe, as well as favourable to contemplation. Wordsworth composed his verses whilst walking, carried them in his memory, and got his wife or daughter to write them down on his return. When a visitor at Rydal Mount asked to see the poet's study, the maid is reported to have shown him a little room containing a handful of books lying about on the table, sofa, and shelves, and to have remarked: "This is the master's library where he keeps his books, but," returning to the door, "his study is out of doors," whereupon she curtsied the visitor into the garden again. Landor also used to compose whilst walking, and therefore always preferred to walk alone. Buckle walked every morning for a quarter of an hour before breakfast, and said that having adopted this custom upon medical advice, it had become necessary. "Heat or cold, sunshine or rain, made no difference to him either for that morning stroll, or for the afternoon walk which had its appointed time and length, and which he would rarely allow himself to curtail, either for business or for visits." Equally careful was Longfellow in the preservation

of his health. He persisted in outdoor exercise, even when the weather was the reverse of pleasant. Both in the spring and autumn, when raw and blustering winds prevailed, he never omitted his daily walk, though he might go no farther than the bounds of his garden. Darwin was at one time fond of horseback exercise, but after the death of his favourite horse, some ten or twelve years ago, he never rode again, but preferred to walk round his garden, or along the pleasant footpaths through the lovely fields of Kent.

Walking was Macaulay's favourite recreation, but, like Leigh Hunt, he seems to have been unable to sever himself from his books. He once said that he would like nothing so well as to bury himself in some great library, and never pass a waking hour without a book before him. Certainly he could never walk without his book. "He walked about London reading; he roamed through the lanes of Surrey reading; and even the new and surprising spectacle of the sea—so suggestive of reverie and brooding thought—could not seduce him from his books." Macaulay reminds us of Thirlwall, who, whether eating, walking, or riding, was never to be seen without a book.

The favourite recreation of Charles Dickens was walking. By day, Professor Ward points out, Dickens found in the London thoroughfares stimulative variety; and by night, in seasons of intellectual excitement, he found in these same streets the refreshment of isolation among crowds. "But the walks he loved best were long stretches on the cliffs, or across the downs by the sea, where, following the track of his 'breathers,' one half expects to meet him coming along against the wind at four and a half miles an hour, the very embodiment of energy and brimful of life."

Carlyle usually took a vigorous walk of several miles, enough to get himself into a glow, before he commenced the day's labour. Whether the spirit moved him or not, he entered his workshop at ten, toiled until three, when he answered his letters, saw friends, read, and sometimes had a second walk. Victor Hugo loves to ride outside an omnibus; Carlyle was fond of riding inside. Apparently, neither walking in the streets, nor riding in a rickety, bone-shaking omnibus, aided Carlyle's digestion; for a more dyspeptic and ill-natured author never breathed.

It was he who called Charles Lamb and Mary a "very sorry pair of phenomena," and pronounced his talk "contemptibly small, indicating wondrous ignorance and shallowness." Never did men of such dissimilar tastes meet before; but they had one taste in common, and that was walking, for which Lamb confessed a restless impulse. How he loved London! Though he liked to pluck buttercups and daisies at times in the country, his sympathies were entirely with London. Like Dr. Johnson, he believed that when a man was tired of London he was tired of life, and he seems never to have grown weary of sounding the praises of that wonderful city, "London, whose dirtiest arab-frequented alley, and her lowest-bowing tradesman," he told Wordsworth, he would not exchange for Skiddaw and Helvellyn, James Walter, and the parson into the bargain. He loved not only the print-shops, the theatres, the bookstalls, but the crowds of human faces. "The wonder of these sights," he says, "impels me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand, from fulness of joy at so much life." But his walks along that lively thoroughfare and elsewhere were not without their drawbacks. "I cannot walk home from office," he said, "but some officious friend offers his unwelcome courtesies to accompany me." In many of his letters he complains "of being a little over-companied," and the only way of escape from his tormentors was to walk into the country. He was not altogether free from them at Edmonton and Enfield. He seems to have been as fond of walking as Scott was of riding, and the prospect of an early release from the drudgery of the desk tempted him to enlarge upon the pleasure his favourite pursuit would bring him. He had thought, in a green old age, of retiring to Ponder's End, "emblematic name, how beautiful! in the Ware Road, there to have made up my accounts with heaven and the company, toddling between it and Cheshunt, anon stretching, on some fine Izaak Walton morning, to Hoddesden or Amwell, careless as a beggar, but walking, walking even till I fairly walked myself off my legs, dying walking!" Three years later he was released from the drudgery of the desk, and he then tells us that "Mary walks her twelve miles a day some days, and I my twenty on others." The change worked admirably, but only for a time. "The spur and discipline of regular hours

being taken away," remarks the Rev. Alfred Ainger, "Lamb had to make occupation, or else to find amusement in its stead. He had always been fond of walking, and he now tried the experiment of a companion in the shape of a dog, Dash, that Hood had given him. But the dog proved unmanageable, and was fond of running away down any other street than those intended by his master, and Lamb had to part with him a year or two later in despair." Lamb's wish that he might die walking was almost realised. Whilst taking his daily morning walk on the London road, as far as the inn where John Gilpin's ride is pictured, he stumbled against a stone, fell, and slightly cut his face. Erysipelas set in, and Lamb died after a day or two's illness.

The interest of a walk in the country is considerably enhanced by a taste for botany; but literary men know comparatively little of the science. Botanising was John Stuart Mill's favourite recreation. "His taste for plant-collecting," says Dr. Bain, "began in France, under George Bentham, and was continued through life. It served him in those limited excursions in the neighbourhood of London, that he habitually kept up the needs of recreation. I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that this taste belongs to a character joyous by nature, and, therefore, easily amused, or perhaps nothing more stimulating is to be had."

Recently, a new form of exercise has been commended to brain-workers by Dr. Richardson, who contends that tricycling will enable them to obtain the change of thought and scene which they need. Tricycles are, unfortunately, awkward machines to stow away, and cannot with safety be used after dark. Stabling accommodation for them is hard to find in London, as well as dear, and they are scarcely suitable ornaments for a drawing-room, or even a back parlour. Dr. Richardson stables his machine in the lobby of his house in Manchester Square. An arrangement of this kind is convenient for the rider, but would be tolerated by few wives. As everybody knows, the learned doctor is a good deal heavier than Fred Archer, yet he can travel with ease fifty miles a day on his tricycle, and, therefore, he is enthusiastic in his praise of tricycling. The popularity of the pursuit is shown in the crowded state of all the roads out of London through eight or nine months of the year, and is becoming popular with literary men.

Some men, however, need neither a horse nor a tricycle. They are so exceptionally constituted as to be able to do with very little outdoor recreation. They find rest in change of occupation or of subject. Sir John Lubbock, for instance, banker and politician, occupies his hours of recreation in studying the habits of ants and bees. Southey found recreation in changing the subject of study. He had six tables in his library—one for poetry, one for criticism, one for biography, and so on; and he said that so long as he could shift from one to the other, he could work for fifteen hours a day easily. But if he were confined to one subject he said that he should have broken down. Leigh Hunt followed the same plan. Sir Richard Alison declared, with much enthusiasm, that the composition of five-and-thirty large volumes in less than as many years, simultaneously with the discharge of exhausting and continual judicial duties, left him at the age of seventy nearly as strong as he was at five-and-twenty. The secret of this circumstance was to be found, he is persuaded, in the diversity of the objects which occupied his mind. Half of each day, he says, is devoted to law, and half to literature; but his residence compelled him to walk six or eight miles a day. Either singly would, he considers, have ruined his health, or terminated his life; but the two together saved him. Recreation to an active mind is, he points out, to be sought not so much in rest as in change of occupation. "I never found," he adds, "that I could do more, either at law or literature, by working at it alone the whole day than by devoting half my time to the other. The fatigue of the two was quite different, and neither disqualified for undergoing the opposite one. Often on returning home after sitting twelve hours in the Small Debt Court, and finding no alleviation of the sense of fatigue by lying on the sofa, I rose up and said: 'I am too tired to rest; I must go and write my history.'"

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A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

THE dingy offices of Messrs. Quickly Brothers were in a dingy street in the neighbourhood of Finsbury Square, and judging by the appearance of the people constantly passing in and out, it was easy to divine that the business of the firm was not what is called high-class. Nor was the personal appearance of the occupants of

the untidy rooms calculated to alter this opinion. From the head and only surviving partner, as he sat at his paper-strewn writing-table in the inner apartment, down to the dirty little errand-boy, perched on a high stool at a desk established on the landing outside the clerks' office, there was a sordid, money-grubbing, hard-dealing look about everybody, by no means comforting or reassuring to business applicants who might happen to be, as one may say, on the wrong side of the hedge.

Mr. James Quickly, sole representative of the firm, was a tall, thin, bony man of sixty, with a bald head, fringed with long iron-grey hair, and mingling with shaggy unkempt whiskers and beard of the same doubtful hue. The bland, kindly tone which marked his speech, and the soft words which it was his custom to use, were so palpably at variance with the whole aspect of the man, that none but the most inexperienced could have been deceived by them. The effect of the keen, piercing eye, the compressed mouth, and the cruel feline jaw, was not to be effaced by any subtlety of manner or speech; and when he looked up from his desk, on the occasion when we have to make his acquaintance, and spoke, he suggested nothing so much as a purring but savage cat.

"A very good day's work that of yours, Master Martin; about the best you ever did in your life, or ever will do," he said, addressing the flashy-looking young man who figured so conspicuously in the railway journey already described.

"Yes," was that individual's reply, as from his stool at an opposite desk he yawned indolently, and displayed his white teeth rather more than usual. "Yes, I flatter myself it was a fair stroke of business, and it makes good what I always say, that if a fellow has got his wits about him, he can easily combine business with pleasure—that is, if he goes upon my principle of putting pleasure before business. Here is an instance, as you must admit, uncle—if I had not been up to my own little game that afternoon, and, taking French leave, cut the office at three instead of six to go down to that little dinner-party Tommy Dowse had asked me to join at his riverside residence at Reading, I should not have come across and spotted Mrs. Margaret Nethercombe, née Boyston, otherwise Mrs. John Crossmore."

"Oh, I must admit you have reason in what you say so far," replied the uncle; "and idle dog that you are, since it is as it

is, I cannot contradict you, only it is precious lucky for you, my boy, that it happened when it did, for I should not have stood your goings-on here much longer, I can tell you. But there! we will not say any more about that now; you will be able to do as you like for the future, and pretty ducks and drakes you will make of your share of the money when you come into it I have no doubt! But that is no affair of mine. It will not affect my share in the good-fortune. A man may do as he likes with his own. By the way, just let us have a look at old Nethercombe's will. We have a copy of it in that box there. I want just to see exactly what it says. Rather hard lines to doom a good-looking girl of two-and-twenty to celibacy for the rest of her life. Let us see."

Mr. James Quickly purred, as it were, whilst slowly uttering these last words, as if the sympathy which they expressed must convince everybody of the kindness of his heart. The young man slipped off his stool, and doing his uncle's behest, laid before him a legal-looking sheet of foolscap docketed, "Copy of the last will and testament of Edward Druce Nethercombe, of Peckham, in the county of Surrey," etc.

"Ah yes—here we have it—just so," presently continued Mr. Quickly, running his eye rapidly over the paper, and then reading aloud: "Humph! yes; last will and testament of me, Edward Druce Nethercombe, etc. Yes, 'I hereby devise and bequeath the whole of my estate, real and personal, to my wife, Margaret, for her sole use and benefit. I give an annuity of four hundred a year to be paid out of my estate to her mother, Mrs. Mary Boyston, of Harwich, in the county of Suffolk,' etc., 'and I give an annuity of four hundred pounds to be paid out of my estate, to her sister, Elizabeth Boyston, of the same place; and I hereby appoint my cousins, James and William Quickly, solicitors,' etc., 'to be executors and trustees of this my will. But in the event of my wife, Margaret, marrying again, after my decease, the whole of my estate, with the exception of certain legacies hereafter named, shall at once revert to my said cousins, James and William, etc., and the annuities above-named shall cease, and no longer be paid to her mother, Mary Boyston, or her sister Elizabeth,' etc. Yes—yes," went on the reader blandly, "that is the pith of it, as I thought, and although I am the last person who ought to grumble, I say again, they are very hard conditions."

"Hard conditions, uncle! What nonsense you talk!" broke in young Martin Quickly half angrily, but laughing his insolent laugh. "The idea of a man coming into all that money, and calling the conditions hard! There really is no satisfying some people," he added; "but just look here; read the legacies out, uncle, or, at any rate, read mine; it is the pleasantest reading I ever found."

"There's the copy; you can read for yourself," replied the elder man, rising and standing with his back to the fire; "you had better learn it by heart."

Mr. Martin Quickly immediately followed his uncle's advice, for, taking up the paper, he read aloud, half-a-dozen times over, the delightful fact that, "To my first cousin once removed, Martin Quickly, I bequeath the sum of five thousand pounds free of probate duty."

Meditating for a minute or two, the head of the firm presently enquired:

"And you really mean to say, Martin, that you discovered Mrs. Nethercombe, alias Crossmore, by her voice?"

"Yes," was the reply. "I never heard such a strange croak in my life; I should have known it again anywhere. One of the advantages of having a good ear."

"But I did not know you had ever seen her," said the uncle.

"Neither have I," said the nephew, "and I only heard her once before."

"And when was that?" asked Mr. James Quickly.

"Oh, about three years ago, I suppose; just after she married old Nethercombe. She and he came here on some business. I was in the outer office, and heard her talking, and I thought to myself, 'What a wonderful voice, I should know that again anywhere;' and I was right, you see, uncle, I did know it again; but I did not see her any more than I did the other day. I was only told who it was when they were gone."

"And you actually remembered it again after all that time," remarked the uncle, "merely from her talking in that railway-carriage?"

"Yes," was the answer; "but I do not know that I should have thought so much of it if she had not swaggered about her husband as she did; that is what seemed to give me the tip somehow—all on a sudden—for I have always been on the look-out for her coming this caper over us some day."

"And the sound of her voice, and a

reference to her husband, aroused your suspicion that it was she?" enquired Mr. Quickly.

"Yes—at any rate that it might be; so I determined to mark her down, and put you on the scent."

"Well, it does you credit, if a man can take credit for mere luck," said the elder lawyer, resuming his seat, and beginning to purr as he went on meditatively: "The sly little minx to go and get married without letting us have a hint of it for more than nine months. It would serve you right, you puss you, to make you and your mother and sister refund the last dividends; but they are doubtless all spent ere this, and it would be throwing good money after bad to attempt it, wretched paupers that you will all three be again now that we stop the supplies. One cannot get money out of a stone, not even when it is a Boyston-e!"

Mr. Quickly laughed unctuously at his own joke, and his nephew shouted aloud at it.

"Capital, uncle, capital!" he said; "what a thing money is! How it sharpens a fellow's wits! But, I say, tell us how you have verified all my suspicions? I mean, how came you to make cock-sure she was married, so as to be able to write and tell her we knew?"

"Oh, very simply," said Mr. Quickly. "We put our friend Doubledon, of Scotland Yard, on the trail, and he soon ran the little fox to earth—discovered the whole affair."

"Well, tell us all about it, do," said the younger man; "you know I have never taken much interest in business affairs—they are not much in my line. Beyond just hearing that old Nethercombe, when he was nearly seventy, married the daughter of some naval captain, or rather the daughter of the captain's widow, living at Harwich, and that our branch of the family was consequently done out of the money, I knew very little. Of course, at his death, I heard of his queer will. He executed it, I was told, only a few days before he died. How did he first come across these Boyston people?"

"Oh, the old idiot was at Harwich in his yacht one year," answered the elder man, "and met the girl, I suppose, somewhere about. She was only seventeen, I believe, and he fell desperately in love with her, and married her. There's no fool like an old fool—like an old fool, you know, Martin."

"Except a young fool, I should think," was the response; "she must have been as great a fool to marry him with that difference of age between them. I wonder her people let her do it; but it was the coin, of course, they went for."

"Of course it was, for the mother and two daughters were just as poor as church mice—genteel paupers. The old lady was a great invalid, and there was a lot of rubbish talked, I remember, on their side, about the daughter sacrificing herself for the sake of the mother, and so on, and old Nethercombe made settlements on them accordingly, as you see by his will here," said Mr. Quickly, purring, and softly patting the paper in front of him, as a cat pats a mouse too cruelly maimed to move.

"Yes," continued the nephew, "I see; and then he does not like the thought of his money going to a second husband, and so he puts a stopper on any little game of that sort! Well, they are bowled out now, anyhow. But I want to know what Doubledon has discovered—where was she married? and who is Crossmore? He will be rather sold! They are all fools together, it seems to me, unless he be a knave as well."

"That is not unlikely," went on the uncle; "but they are hard conditions, I repeat. As to Doubledon—well, he has ascertained, as far as we know at present, that, about a year ago, old Nethercombe's young widow goes on a visit to some unsophisticated clerical friends, right away in Cornwall, leaving her mother and sister at Harwich, where they had always continued to live. In Cornwall she picks up, and there and then marries, this Mr. John Crossmore, a gentleman concerned in some mining operations. Here is a copy of the marriage certificate, dated just ten months back. I suppose her mother and sister knew nothing of it until it was too late, or they might have interfered. Probably the young widow guessed as much, and kept it dark, for of course, at her time of life, love is everything and money nothing; but it is to be hoped Mr. Crossmore has got some, for he has married a beggar, as he will find. As you say, Martin, they seem all idiots together, for one would have thought he would have taken the trouble to learn the condition of his predecessor's bequests. But I dare say he was very much in love, and she, being the same, what did it matter? However, the mother and sister seem to have been frightened when they heard of it, for, you see, they slipped their

cable and left Harwich, and took this little place at Stokesly, so as to keep out of the way on the quiet, without our knowing it, and as I have always been in the habit of paying in their dividends to their bankers, we should not have heard of their move—perhaps for years—but for your lucky discovery, Martin; indeed, I had ceased to think about them. I looked upon the case as hopeless, for I never imagined young Mrs. Nethercombe would have been such an idiot as to get married again, however much she might have been in love. You would have expected that she would have done anything rather than reduce her mother and sister—to say nothing of herself—to penury again. Really, Martin, the firm ought to hold themselves much indebted to you!”

“Yes, I think they ought,” was that gentleman’s reply; “which being the case, I will get some luncheon with your permission, uncle;” and putting on his hat, he left the office.

CHAPTER IV.

SAD and sorrowful was the change which overtook the Boyston household, soon after the arrival of that fatal letter from Messrs. Quickly Brothers.

The pretty little country home in the out-of-the-way Oxfordshire village, with all its snug, quiet, rural beauty, had to be exchanged for a cheap London lodging in Kennington, with all the penurious and comfortless surroundings indigenous to such a location and the attendant circumstances. Nearly three months had elapsed, and Christmas was fast approaching. The poor invalid mother had been utterly prostrated by the removal from Elm Lawn, and the withdrawal of all those delicacies and comforts rendered inevitable through the change of fortune brought about by her youngest daughter’s second marriage.

“It is, perhaps, but just retribution,” urged Miss Boyston to her lover one evening, as they were sitting together in the little parlour adjoining the invalid’s room. “You know, Herbert, we were retaining the money under false pretences. We had no right to it; but Heaven knows you and I had but one thought, and that was only to secure for the last days of our dear one there, a home, in which she might end them in decency and comfort. If you and I have ever had any selfish thoughts as well about our own marriage, and in which this money played a part, we are rightly punished now.”

“Do not speak of it, Lizzie,” said Joyce

indignantly; “you bear it more bravely than I can, and take a higher view of it all. I dare say you are right, dear Lizzie, and my legal training ought to make me as sensitive to this question as your own Christian heart does; but the fact is, dearest, in the face of that abominable, iniquitous will, my very sense of right and wrong gets twisted. I do not think I realised, until we were obliged to bring your poor mother away from Stokesly to this miserable place, as the most convenient thing to do, how truly heartless, selfish, and atrocious are the conditions of that old curmudgeon’s will. To doom a girl, a mere child, as Margaret is still, to remain unmarried for the rest of her life, was bad and cruel enough; but to make her nearest and dearest suffer also—well, really,” exclaimed the young barrister with increasing warmth, “it is beyond anything I ever heard of, and seems to make what, before the law of man, would be a fraud, appear but an act of duty before the tribunal of a higher power. I swear, Lizzie, I should have had no compunction in keeping the secret to the very end, if it had been possible. How long was it after old Nethercombe’s marriage that he executed this second will?”

“Very shortly before his death,” answered Miss Boyston; “he was always wickedly jealous of his wife, and when he knew his end was near, he made this new will. He sent for me, and told me what he had done, and why; he said that by reducing us to poverty once more, he would make assurance doubly sure that she should not marry again. The will he signed on the day he was married had no such conditions in it; this one seems to have been quite an afterthought, prompted by the arch-fiend of jealousy.”

“Yes; well, there was nothing to prevent his doing this, of course,” went on Joyce, dropping his vehement tone to one of dejection. “As he had made no independent settlements upon his wife or any of you, as he ought to have been made to do, and as he should have been made to do if I had been at hand to advise, there was nothing to prevent his revoking his first will. By Jove! it makes my blood boil! Was it not enough for you and your mother to consent to this horrible sacrifice on any terms, but that you should still have been left to the mercy of this old brute’s caprice? It is too, too dreadful. Well, it is more than ever necessary now that I should make some money to help you along with, for your mother’s poor little pension is

barely sufficient to keep one body and soul together, much less three. How you ever managed to jog along as you did before old Nethercombe turned up is a marvel."

"But surely, Herbert," protested Miss Boyston, "Mr. Crossmore can be made to maintain his wife? She, at least, should not enter into our ways and means."

"Of course he must support her, if he has anything to support her upon, which is doubtful," answered Herbert; "but first of all we must find him, and that does not appear easy. It is two months since Margaret has had any tidings of him, and he is not to be heard of at either of the addresses he gave her. You have seen that her letters to him are all returned by the post-office. There never was a more flagrant case. Depend on it, he is nothing but a low adventurer, as I anticipated when I found out the little I did about him. He only married that poor foolish child for the sake of her money, and now he has got wind of the true state of affairs, he disappears. Do you know, Lizzie, I have it strongly in my mind to run over to Jersey myself, and do a little private detective service on my own account! It would be far less expensive than employing a professional, and as I know, from previous information, that he was often to be heard of there, I have a great mind to go and see what I can do in the business myself."

Infinite was the talk which this suggestion raised. Arguments for and against the plan were urged from every point, and finally it was decided that Herbert Joyce, armed with some additional particulars concerning this mysterious husband of Margaret's, should go himself to Jersey, and try and bring the fellow to book.

It is not the purpose of this narrative to follow the young barrister through all the devious and difficult paths by which he ultimately achieved his object. We need only look in upon the family circle once more in order to bring the story of this second marriage to an end.

The occasion is a propitious one, for it is Christmas Eve, and Herbert Joyce has returned from his expedition to the humble lodgings in Kennington. There is a radiance about his earnest face as he is welcomed by her to whom his presence is always as a ray of light, which contrasts forcibly with the gloom and sadness pervading the little home.

"I have only just obtained the final piece of evidence necessary to complete my case, Lizzie," said Herbert in reply to

the enquiry why he had not written to warn them of his coming, "and you could not have received a letter sooner than you have received me. I might have telegraphed you certainly, but I preferred bringing you the good news in *propria persona*."

"Ah, then, you have found Mr. Crossmore, and he is willing——" began Lizzie Boyston; but her lover stopped her by a gesture as he said:

"Restrain your curiosity, dear Lizzie, and just let me tell you the main facts as briefly as possible in their proper order; they are very few and simple. I discovered that Mr. John Crossmore is a fiction altogether—that is, he has no real existence, for the name we know him by is only an assumed one. I rather suspected this, and verified my suspicion by means of the photograph of the individual which you gave me out of Margaret's desk before I started."

"Hush! she has not missed it," said Miss Boyston, raising her finger, "and she is in the next room with the dear mother."

The lovers were sitting as usual near each other, with their backs towards the folding-doors—which were shut—of the mean little parlours, and as he glanced over his shoulder the young barrister went on:

"Well, it does not matter, she will have to hear it all directly; but you shall tell her if you please. To proceed. At the post-office, at the bank, and at various other public and likely places at St. Heliers, where I made enquiries, no one had ever heard the name of Crossmore, but at the registrar's office, when I showed the photograph, as I always did when I put my question, a knowing young clerk cried out with perfect conviction:

"'Why, that's Mr. Turndale, or, if it is not, his ghost must have sat for the picture!'

"'Then,' said I, 'who is Mr. Turndale, and where does he live?'

"'Difficult to say who he is,' replied the clerk; 'he is to and fro here a good deal, something in the commercial-traveller line, I suspect—turns his hand to anything that may turn up, and he lives at St. Brelades across the bay.'

"This answer suggested to me in a moment the possibility that I had come upon my man."

"'Ah!' I said, 'you do not know who he is. That is asking too much in a place like Jersey. Strangers here are not always what they appear to be.'

"'No,' said the clerk, 'we have a good many aliases here at times, but I do not think but what this person's name is his

real one anyhow, seeing he was married by it, here, in this very office.'

"Lizzie, my darling," cried Mr. Joyce, unable any longer to continue his story in its proper sequence, "in two words, this scoundrel was already married when he first met Margaret, and is no more her husband than I am. It is a fact," hurriedly went on the speaker, disregarding Miss Boyston's startled expression of surprise; "I cannot tell you all the ins and outs of the way in which I proved it, and how I identified Mr. John Crossmore with this man Turndale; but I did. He was married at that very office to which a kindly fate guided my footsteps. I saw the record in the registrar's book, with the fellow's signature, James Turndale, in the handwriting of John Crossmore unmistakably, and the date three years ago—that is, rather more than two years before he contracted this bigamous alliance with Margaret.

"I found my way to St. Brelades, and after some trouble found the man—confronted him, and convicted him out of his own mouth, before his own wife. He had no suspicion at first as to what I was driving at; but when I suddenly mentioned the name of Boyston, and accused him point-blank of his crime, he was so thunderstruck that he could not deny it. I never saw a man so bowled over in my life—a mean, contemptible hound, who, when he partially recovered himself, began entreating that we should not prosecute. He actually went down on his knees to me, and the poor little woman, his wife, with a baby in her arms, when she realised the truth, did the same. Directly the Christmas vacation is over I shall put the case in legal train, and Messrs. Quickly Brothers will have to hand back all old Nethercombe's property, for it belongs to Margaret and you, and to no one else."

In their excitement over this rapidly and incoherently delivered recital the two lovers had drawn closer together than ever, and had not observed that the folding door behind them had been softly opened, and that Margaret Nethercombe, emerging from it, had overheard the whole of the latter part of what Herbert Joyce had been saying.

Altogether it was about as singular a case as the gentlemen of the long robe had been engaged in for a considerable time.

The fact that it never came into court has, with the assistance of fictitious names of people and places, permitted its narration in the present form, and that it was not left to the decision of a judge and jury was due to the skilful management of it by Mr. Herbert Joyce. Anxious to shield his fair friends from all unnecessary annoyance and exposure, he contrived, by the aid of counsel's opinion and many little dexterous and intricate manœuvres, so to show Messrs. Quickly Brothers that they had not a leg to stand on, that after the first steps had been taken in the action, those distinguished solicitors made no attempt to defend it.

Thus "reclaimed," and now "held by right," by Margaret Nethercombe and her mother and sister, the property has never again been jeopardised by any imprudent act on the part of the young widow. The deception practised on her by the unscrupulous adventurer Crossmore, alias Turndale, alias anybody else, seemed to read her a salutary lesson, for the weak and foolish girl has developed into what it may not be too much to call an uncompromising champion of woman's rights. Her old character has undergone a mighty change, and on all platforms where the most advanced arguments are used for the emancipation of the sex from the tyranny of man, she stands conspicuous as a fluent orator, whose remarkably shrill voice lends additional venom to her utterances, whilst the erewhile undecided hands have assumed a vigour of action which adds not a little intensity to the superabundant gesticulation. That her logic is not always of the soundest is to be excused, remembering her hard experience, and Herbert Joyce and his wife are only too glad that so harmless an outlet has been found for the spirit of revenge to which the treatment she had received not unnaturally gave rise.

The revulsion of feeling which came over her at first inspired her with a fierce desire to prosecute her deceiver and punish him with the utmost rigour of the law, but as he was carefully allowed to decamp, she was easily dissuaded by her relatives from this course, and by degrees she readily adopted that in which she has become a shining light, whilst Herbert Joyce, Q.C., Esq., now that he is in a fair way of being able ultimately to confer on his wife the dignity of a judge's wife, can afford to smile at the vagaries of his sister-in-law.

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